DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 079 656 CG 008 136

AUTHOR Wilson, Maurice T.; Koeske, Gary F.
TITLE Sex Stereotyping in a Selected Sample of Black American Adolescents.
PUB DATE 71
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; Black Community; Females; Identification (Psychological); *Males; *Negro Attitudes; Negro Students; *Negro Youth; Research Projects; Secondary School Students; *Self Concept; Seniors; Sex (Characteristics); *Stereotypes

ABSTRACT

The present study investigated three major hypotheses: (1) that black respondents' judgments of black targets would show greater uniformity than their judgments of white targets; (2) that, contrary to trends in white samples, black males would be perceived less positively than black females; and (3) that self-ratings for black males would be less positive than those for black females. The questionnaire was administered to 48 black male and 72 black female seniors at a predominantly black metropolitan area high school. Results indicate that although all black targets are more uniformly viewed than white men or women, black male targets are less positively viewed than black female targets. However, black male respondents' self-perception was found to be equally positive to that of black females. Data support the contention that the black family structure, devised to cope with a dominant, antagonistic white society, has produced an alteration in sex roles vis a vis the white subculture. (Author)

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Sex Stereotyping in a Selected Sample of Black American Adolescents

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Maurice T. Wilson and Gary F. Koeske

University of Pittsburgh

Interpersonal perception and sex role stereotyping between men and women has recently come under increased scientific scrutiny. Little investigation has been made, however, of the interpersonal perceptions of black men and women.

Recent studies of sex role stereotypes involving white respondents (Rosenkrantz et al., 1968) suggest that masculine characteristics are more highly valued by both sexes and that responents' self evaluations are closely tied to the positivity of sex-appropriate traits. But several factors suggest that societal expectations of sex relevant behaviors for black Americans are not consistent with those held for white Americans.

Research on black family patterns, often judging them against white norms, has delineated factors which might predispose black children, especially males, to identify problems. There are indications that black mothers may have been tempted to socialize out of their sons many aggressive behaviors, so that they were better prepared for survival in a hostile society. In addition, status differentials for the sexes may not parallel those in the white population. Bernard (1966) has contended that black women tend, in general, to belong to a higher class than black men, as measured by education, acculturation, and income. Support for this contention comes from clinical interviews with young black wives reported by Grier and Cobbs (1966). Such evidence has led some investigators (DeVos and Hippler, 1969) to postulate an antagonism between the sexes involving masculine fear of impotence, overcompensation, and devaluation of black women, matched by feminine distrust and disrespect for black men.

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Classical stereotype research employing an adjective check-list procedure has demonstrated that groups familiar to the respondents are rated with greater uniformity and positivity (Vinacke, 1956; Triandis and Vassiliou, 1967). This procedure provides a useful method for examining several hypotheses concerning sex-role stereotyping, identity, and perception of whites in a black population. The present study investigated three major hypotheses: 1) that black respondents' judgments of black targets would show greater uniformity than their judgments of white targets; 2) that, contrary to trends in white samples, black males would be perceived less positively than black females; and 3) that self-ratings for black males would be less positive than those for black females.

Method

Respondents and procedure

Responses were obtained from 48 black male and 72 black female seniors at a predominantly black metropolitan area high school. The questionnaire instrument was administered by the first investigator with the assistance of two female teachers. The investigator was introduced as a graduate student conducting a survey in social perception. The black male investigator was conservatively dressed in slacks and sports shirt so as to be minimally obtrusive in the test situation.

The adjective checklist instrument

The respondents were asked to read through a list of 87 adjectives and select those which seemed to best describe the target, e.g., Most Black Men. They were told to circle as many words as they felt necessary to characterize the group adequately. The 87 trait adjectives came from several sources, including Katz and Braly, 1933; Koeske, 1970; and a pilot study.

All respondents provided descriptions for the targets Black Men, Black Women, Black Fathers, Black Mothers, White Men, and White Women. A yourself target was included to elicit self perceptions. The black targets were presented in

counterbalanced order, followed by the white targets. Following the last target, respondents were asked to rate each adjective in the list on the basis of positive (+), neutral (0), or negative (-) evaluative meaning to them. A short background questionnaire was included at the end of the instrument to collect specific demographic information.

Results

Relative uniformity of stereotypes--Hypothesis One

Simply counting the number of adjectives which more than 50% of the respondents included in their description of a target is offered here as an adequate index of uniformity. The larger the number of adjectives that 50% or more of the respondents included in their description, the more agreement or uniformity there is in the stereotyped judgment of the target.

Examination of Table 3 reveals that very few adjectives were checked by 50% or more of the respondents for the white targets. The mean number of adjectives reaching the 50% criterion for the white targets was 4.00 (n=4); the mean number for the black targets (Tables 1 and 2) was 14.62 (n=8). It is apparent, in line with hypothesis one, that stereotypes of black (familiar) targets were more uniform than those for the less familiar white targets.

Comparisons of evaluative stereotypes--Hypotheses Two and Three

Evaluation effects were assessed by obtaining the correlation between the evaluation of the adjectives (supplied by the mean of the respondents' ratings of the adjectives as positive, neutral, or negative) and the frequency with which they were attributed to the target, i.e., the number of respondents who checked the particular adjective. Thus, adjectives were treated as subjects, with each of the 87 adjectives having an evaluative measure and a frequency measure associated with it. The more positive the $r_{eval., freq.}$ the greater the extent to which highly positive words were being frequently attributed to the target, and the more positively viewed was the target.

Table 4 reports the comparisons of the $r_{eval., freq.}$ for the cases relevant to hypothesis two. Of the four critical cases listed at the top of the table, only

the comparison of Black Men with Black Women by male respondents was not significant, though it was in the predicted direction. In the other three cases, the female targets (Women or Mothers) were rated significantly ($p < .001$) more positive than the corresponding male target.

The section on male-female comparisons in Table 4 also shows that the image of White Men is the most negative of all targets, and significantly more negative than the image of White Women.

The section of Table 4 devoted to race comparisons reveals that black targets were always viewed very significantly more positive ($p < .001$) than corresponding white targets.

Fisher Z test done to compare the male and female respondents in their rating of each target yielded only one significant effect out of seven tests. White Men was viewed more negatively by males ($r = -.29$) than females ($r = -.04$) at $p < .05$. The critical respondent comparison for hypothesis three was the comparison of the self ratings. The r for males was +.85 and for females +.82, which were not significantly different from each other.

Perceived similarity and difference among the targets

An index of perceived similarity between the targets is derivable from the correlation of the frequencies of checking the 87 adjectives. A high positive correlation indicates that two targets are seen to be similar. Table 5 presents these correlated frequencies in the form of a multi-trait, multi-method matrix (Campbell and Fiske, 1959). Respondents are methods and targets are traits. The validity diagonal, containing the underlined coefficients, reflects the across method (respondent) agreement in the perception of the targets. These correlations are higher than corresponding coefficients in the matrix, indicating that the targets were fairly commonly viewed regardless of who rated them and that they were differentiated from one another.

Finally, the circled and connected r's in Table 5 involve the correlation (perceived similarity) of the respondent (his or her self rating) and an adult target of the same or opposite sex. Reviewing the relevant comparisons for male respondents in the first column of the matrix, we see that black male respondents in none of the four cases perceives himself significantly more similar to the male than female target. The Fisher Z's were in every case less than 1.00. The same comparisons for the female respondents show that the girls in every case perceived greater similarity between themselves and female adult than male adult targets. All the comparisons were significant $p < .01$.

Discussion

Certain specific findings are clearly represented in the data: 1) All black targets are very positively viewed, 2) All black targets are more uniformly and positively viewed than either white target, 3) Black male targets, though, are significantly less positively viewed than black female targets, in support of hypothesis two, and 4) Black male respondents' self-perception is equally as positive as that of black females, contrary to hypothesis three. Finally, 5) male respondents, in contrast to females, do not perceive greater similarity to same-sex adult targets than opposite-sex adult targets.

Taken together, however, the findings are complex and not entirely coherent. The relatively low evaluation of black males and the male respondents' apparent lack of special identification with black men and fathers support those orientations which argue that the black family structure, devised to cope with a dominant, antagonistic white society, has produced an alteration in sex role vis a vis in the white subculture.

Our data do not support the conclusion that the relative devaluation of the black males and possible identification difficulties for male youngsters are tied to a negative self-concept. Indeed, the self-perception of our male respondents was the most positive of all characterizations in the study. The very high self-percept could reflect a defensivenss which overshadows a really

negative self-image. Those who have examined defensive reactions among blacks in clinical settings (Grier and Cobb, 1966, 1971; Poussiant, 1971) point out that ego-defensive reactions are typically characterized by extremely negative perceptions of whites, mistrust of other blacks, and extremely inflated self-perception. Our data show the extremely inflated self-perception for male and female respondents. Also, the males evaluation of White Men was the most negative characterization in the study ($r = -.29$), but only moderately negative in the absolute sense. There is little evidence, however, of mistrust of other blacks by the male respondents, except for the frequent attribution of "aggressive," "quick-tempered," "sly," and "revengful" to Black Men and Black Fathers.

An interpretation that seems to fit most of the results is that the lower positive rating of black males and the boys lack of "identification" with them arose from the respondents' feeling that adult men are not sufficiently militant. Unfortunately, we have little or no direct evidence for this interpretation, though it is consistent with the highly positive self-characterizations. That is, a very positive self-image would be expected of respondents influenced by elements of a black power ideology. Data from the background questionnaire did show that 94% of all respondents preferred to be called "black" or "Afro-American" as opposed to "negro." In addition, "militant" entered the lists of 25 most frequently checked adjectives in reference to a black male target only one time out of a possible four (it was attributed to Black Men by 36% of the females). It must also be noted that the negative adjectives frequently attributed to black males include such seemingly militant and power-related terms as "aggressive," "quick-tempered," "stubborn," "argumentative," and "pushy." These terms might have been selected by our respondents in reference to black adult males' treatment of the adolescents themselves, rather than more generally or in relation to the white majority. What or who is the actual target of the black males' power (as perceived by our respondents) is a question to be taken up in subsequent investigation.

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Table 1

Percentage of Male Respondents Checking Their Twenty-five Most Frequently Checked Adjectives for "Yourself" and the Four Black Targets

Rank	Yourself S	%	Black Men BMe	%	Black Women BW	%	Black Fathers BF	%	Black Mothers BMo	%
1	Ambitious	77	Aggressive	79	Loving	77	Strong	79	Affectionate	77
2	Proud	70	Proud	72	Affectionate	68	Proud	70	Loving	77
3	Understanding	70	Strong	72	Pleas. loving	68	Aggressive	66	Proud	74
4	Friendly	68	Quick temper	64	Emotional	64	Quick temper	64	Kind	72
5	Intelligent	66	Ambitious	60	Friendly	62	Stubborn	64	Emotional	66
6	Strong	64	Intelligent	55	Proud	62	Mature	60	Forgiving	64
7	Aggressive	62	Pleas. loving	53	Talkative	62	Ambitious	57	Friendly	62
8	Honest	62	Sly	53	Excitable	53	Loyal to fam.	53	Faithful	60
9	Loving	62	Communicative	51	Intelligent	53	Bug you	51	Generous	60
10	Trustful	60	Mature	51	Forgiving	51	Intelligent	51	Honest	60
11	Kind	57	Friendly	49	Gossipy	49	Argumentative	49	Intelligent	60
12	Mature	57	Stubborn	47	Kind	49	Dominant	49	Pleas. loving	60
13	Reasonable	55	Musical	45	Understanding	47	Honest	47	Cooperative	57
14	Calm	53	Reasonable	45	Ambitious	45	Understanding	47	Loyal to fam.	57
15	Generous	51	Loving	43	Quick temper	45	Forgiving	45	Religious	57
16	Quick temper	51	Argumentative	40	Stubborn	45	Pushy	45	Understanding	55
17	Forgiving	49	Dominant	40	Mature	43	Communicative	43	Mature	53
18	Pleas. loving	49	Industrious	36	Generous	40	Cooperative	43	Trustful	51
19	Communica.	47	Outgoing	36	Reasonable	40	Friendly	43	Keeps peace	51
20	Cooperative	47	Skeptical	36	Sensitive	40	Kind	43	Reasonable	51
21	Musical	47	Conservative	34	Aggressive	38	Loving	43	Excitable	49
22	Faithful	45	Religious	34	Cooperative	38	Pleas. loving	43	Quick temper	46
23	Keeps peace	40	Revengful	34	Faithful	38	Excitable	38	Gossipy	46
24	Obedient	40	Talkative	34	Religious	36	Faithful	38	Communicative	44
25	Loyal to fam.	40	Understanding	34	Bug you	33	Industrious	38	Calm	42
					Sly	33	Generous	38	Ambitious	42
					Outgoing	33	Keeps peace	38	Strong	42
					Communicative	33			Talkative	42

Note.--Underlined adjective for each target is the last one checked by 50% or more of the 48 male respondents.

Table 2

Percentage of Female Respondents Checking their Twenty-five Most Frequently checked adjectives for "Yourself" and the Four Black Targets

Rank	Yourself S	%	Black Men BMe	%	Black Women BW	%	Black Fathers BF	%	Black Mothers BMo	%
1	Friendly	92	Strong	81	Friendly	71	Strong	78	Affectionate	79
2	Honest	80	Proud	75	Affectionate	69	Proud	71	Loving	76
3	Understanding	79	Quick temper	69	Understanding	69	Quick temper	61	Loyal to fam.	76
4	Mature	78	Friendly	64	Proud	68	Forgiving	57	Mature	76
5	Kind	75	Stubborn	63	Loving	67	Loyal to fam.	57	Proud	76
6	Loving	75	Aggressive	60	Emotional	65	Loving	53	Understanding	75
7	Proud	74	Ambitious	60	Mature	65	Mature	53	Forgiving	72
8	Trustful	74	Pleas. loving	57	Pleas. loving	58	Intelligent	51	Faithful	71
9	Affectionate	72	Communicative	51	Talkative	58	Stubborn	50	Kind	69
10	Forgiving	71	Affectionate	50	Excitable	57	Ambitious	49	Friendly	68
11	Ambitious	67	Intelligent	50	Gossipy	57	Argumentative	49	Emotional	64
12	Intelligent	67	Loving	50	Ambitious	56	Friendly	49	Generous	63
13	Reasonable	64	Sly	49	Intelligent	56	Faithful	46	Honest	60
14	Faithful	61	Argumentative	44	Kind	56	Generous	44	Communicative	57
15	Cooperative	60	Outgoing	44	Aggressive	54	Kind	44	Reasonable	56
16	Pleas. loving	58	Kind	42	Forgiving	54	Reasonable	43	Cooperative	54
17	Generous	56	Mature	39	Quick temper	54	Understanding	43	Intelligent	54
18	Calm	53	Excitable	38	Generous	51	Communicative	42	Trustful	54
19	Emotional	53	Militant	36	Sensitive	51	Over-protect	42	Keeps peace	53
20	Shy	53	Understanding	36	Stubborn	51	Distrustful	40	Over-protect	53
21	Sensitive	51	Emotional	33	Faithful	47	Pushy	40	Keeps peace	53
22	Loyal to fam.	50	Individualist	35	Reasonable	47	Aggressive	39	Excitable	51
23	Stubborn	50	Pushy	33	Cooperative	46	Keeps peace	39	Strong	51
24	Excitable	50	Forgiving	31	Argumentative	44	Pleas. loving	37	Quick temper	51
25	Quick temper	47	Arrogant	31	Outgoing	44	Industrious	37	Ambitious	50
			Unfaithful	31	Communicative	44	Honest	37	Gossipy	50
			Lazy	31						
			Distrustful	31						

Note.--Underlined adjective for each target is the last one checked by 50% or more of the 72 female respondents.

Table 3

Percentage of Respondents Checking the Twenty-five Most Frequently Checked Adjectives for the Two White Targets

	Male Respondents				Female Respondents			
Rank	White Men WM	%	White Women WW	%	White Men WM	%	White Women WW	%
1	Bug you	60	Pleasure loving	60	Ambitious	76	Ambitious	54
2	Aggressive	56	Emotional	53	Bug you	72	Bug you	53
3	Ambitious	53	Loving	53=	Intelligent	66	Intelligent	47
4	Arrogant	51	Excitable	44	Distrustful	62	Friendly	46
5	Cowardly	49	Ambitious	40	Egotistical	59	Aggressive	44
6	Pushy	49	Childish	40	Aggressive	57	Emotional	43
7	Egotistical	47	Gossipy	40	Pushy	50	Excitable	43
8	Revengeful	47	Friendly	40	Proud	49	Distrustful	41
9	Distrustful	44	Intelligent	40	Arrogant	47	Pleasure loving	41
10	Argumentative	40	Kind	40	Industrious	46	Sly	41
11	Ignorant	40	Talkative	40	Mature	46	Gossipy	38
12	Stubborn	40	Arrogant	38	Sly	46	Mature	38
13	Stupid	40	Affectionate	36	Unreliable	43	Communicative	37
14	Sly	36	Aggressive	36	Cowardly	40	Loyal to family	37
15	Unfaithful	38	Mature	36	Argumentative	38	Pushy	37
16	Weak	38	Weak	36	Indifferent	37	Affectionate	34
17	Quick tempered	36	Bug you	33	Influencial	35	Childish	34
18	Conservative	33	Conservative	33	Revengful	35	Happy go lucky	34
19	Naive	33	Distrustful	33	Strong	35	Proud	34
20	Proud	33	Faithful	33	Stubborn	35	Outgoing	32
21	Religious	33	Sensitive	33	Unfaithful	35	Unreliable	32
22	Talkative	33	Stubborn	33	Conservative	34	Arrogant	32
23	Emotional	31	Ignorant	31	Friendly	34	Egotistical	31
24	Industrious	31	Naive	31	Loyal to family	34	Understanding	31
25	Noncommunicative	31	Proud	31	Weak	34	Weak	31
	Radical	31	Religious	31	Childish	34		
	Skeptical	31	Sly	31				
			Unfaithful	31				
			Cooperative	31				

Note.--Underlined adjective for each target is the last one checked by 50% or more of the 48 male and 72 female respondents.

Table 4

Comparisons of Evaluation - Frequency of Attribution Correlations for Relevant Pairs of the Different Targets

Sex of Respondent	$Target_1$	r_1	$Target_2$	r_2	t
	Male-Female Comparisons: Black Targets				
Male	Black Men (BMe)	.53	Black Women (BW)	.61	1.01
Female	Black Men (BMe)	.49	Black Women (BW)	.70	3.48**
Male	Black Fathers (BF)	.59	Black Mothers (BMo)	.80	3.98**
Female	Black Fathers (BF)	.64	Black Mothers (BMo)	.79	3.55**
	Male-Female Comparisons: White Targets				
Male	White Men (WM)	-.29	White Women (WW)	.23	5.99**
Female	White Men (WM)	-.04	White Women (WW)	.17	2.91*
	Black-White Comparisons				
Male	Black Men (BMe)	.53	White Men (WM)	-.29	9.24**
Female	Black Men (BMe)	.49	White Men (WM)	-.04	5.65**
Male	Black Women (BW)	.61	White Women (WW)	.23	6.34**
Female	Black Women (BW)	.70	White Women (WW)	.17	7.68**

*$p < .01$
**$p < .001$

Note.--All tests above are t's devised by Hotelling for the significance of the difference between nonindependent r's (Edwards, 1964). Significance levels are for two-tailed tests in each case.

Table 5

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients Relating Frequency of Attribution of the 87 Adjectives to All Targets for Male and Female Respondents

		Method One - Male Respondents							Method Two - Female Respondents						
	Trait (Target)	S	BMe	BW	BF	BMo	WM	WW	S	BMe	BW	BF	BMo	WM	WW
Method one- Male Respondents	BMe	(.71)													
	BW	(.64)	.54												
	BF	(.75)	.74	.58											
	BMo	(.78)	.48	.84	.67										
	WM	-.06	.32	.11	.20	-.11									
	WW	.23	.26	.72	.26	.52	.32								
Method Two- Female Respondents	S	85	(.48)	(.74)	(.61)	(.85)	-.14	.44							
	BMe	(66)	.85	.61	.72	.52	.33	.40	(.55)						
	BW	(.72)	.61	.87	.64	.83	.05	.58	(.82)	.70					
	BF	(.76)	.71	.61	.85	.73	.15	.29	(.70)	.79	.72				
	BMo	(.77)	.48	.78	.69	.95	-.08	.47	(.86)	.56	.86	.80			
	WM	.13	.43	.18	.32	.00	.73	.36	.02	.47	.17	.32	.06		
	WW	.27	46	.56	.36	.33	.55	.67	.31	.57	.55	.40	.41	.76	

Note.--Circled coefficients connected by a line indicate perceived similarity of Self to same-sex vs. opposite-sex adult.